

THE  
COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

VOL. II.

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No. 1.

WITH the incoming of the "NEW YEAR," we commence the second volume of our *Journal*, and we gladly avail ourselves of the opportunity it affords, to proffer cordial and friendly greetings to our patrons and readers, and to salute, with fraternal kindness, ALL, *every where*, who are enlisted in the great cause of advancing human welfare, through the medium of a more thorough, enlarged, and perfect education of the whole people.

This is an occasion, upon which, by immemorial custom, the conductor of a Periodical is privileged to call his readers, as it were, around him, and to speak to them, almost with domestic familiarity, of himself and his cause, of his past successes and discouragements, and of his motives and purposes for the future ;—in fine, after toiling a year for his subscribers, he is indulged with an hour for himself, of egotism and self-complacency.

We will not stretch this personal prerogative, on this occasion, nor weary our auditors with over much speaking upon our own feelings or concerns. While we may have had too much success for repining, we have realized by far too little for boasting. If flattery, and the sweet incense of applause, be the desire of any one, let him attach himself to some party or faction, whose moral test of measures is, their subserviency to a private end ; but let him withdraw from a field of exertion, where so many adverse views are to be conciliated, and where a faithful and conscientious performance of duty will rouse into activity, and marshal in hostile array against him, not only the interests of the selfish, but the prejudices of the well-meaning. Whoever strives to ameliorate the condition of mankind by adjuring them to make temporary sacrifices for benefits, that are prospective, however valuable and enduring ; or to resist the seductions of present pleasure, even for a glorious reversion of future good, is training himself in the school of humility and forbearance, rather than in that of pride and triumph. Or, if we may change the form of phraseology, we would say, that the general nature of mankind is the same out of the water as in it ; and whoever plunges in to rescue a drowning man, is not in a little danger of being made to explore the bottom himself.

This, we will venture to say, that such opportunity and ability as we have possessed, have been unreservedly and strenuously devoted to the service of our readers, and to the cause in which we are unitedly engaged. The whole editorial charge of this paper, and all the incidental expenses belonging to it, we have voluntarily and gratuitously assumed,—in order that we might reach a class of persons, who never before have been addressed on the momentous subject of the moral and intellectual training of their offspring. But pecuniary gain was no part of our motive in undertaking the work, and therefore, no disappointment has been experienced ;—and, if life and health are spared to us, we shall not be deterred from prosecuting our editorial labors, *on the same terms*, for another year. To speak to the mass of the people of solemn subjects, to which their attention has never been, in any systematic or persevering manner, before called ; to rouse them to the consideration of interests more noble and enduring, than any of those which, with insatiable avidity, they are pursuing ; to attempt to

turn their attention to their offspring, and to those essentials in the welfare of their offspring, compared with which, wealth is a bauble, and the loudest blast of fame, but as a fleeting voice of the night-wind ; to make some of the crowd of mankind believe, that, however keenly they may enjoy their present pleasures, there is a part of their nature, which, as yet, they have not explored, where treasures, both enduring and exhaustless, may be found ; to call upon them to adopt such practical measures,—to do such actual deeds,—as will lead to domestic well-being, to social order, to the ascendancy of principle over passion, to patriotism, and to philanthropy, which is more than patriotism ;—these were our purposes, and we hold it to be a part of the everlasting ordinances of Heaven, that efforts for such ends cannot be without requital.

If our friends are desirous to know how the present condition of Common School education in this State, compares with what it was a few years ago, we feel fully warranted in assuring them, that a brighter day has arisen upon it. On the cold soil of 1837, many genial influences have fallen, and nourished it as with the rays of the warming sun, and the drops of the fruitful shower. School committees receive a small requital for their services, and are performing them with greater fidelity ; good teachers are more studiously sought after, and are obtaining higher remuneration,—and, what is equally important, the pretensions of incompetent ones are less secure from exposure ; the idea of what a good teacher is, and what he should do, is penetrating, slowly but surely, into that all but impenetrable substance—the public mind ; the appropriations by towns are enlarged ; while, simultaneously, the expenditure for private schools is diminishing, and some excellent teachers of private schools have been transferred to public ones ; the average length of the schools is increased ; the Legislature has passed several wise and salutary laws, which have enabled the friends of Common School education to combine their scattered forces, and given to them the efficiency of union, and the encouragement and ardor of a more harmonious action ;—and, lastly, private munificence has been extended, *for the first time*, to any considerable amount, to this neglected institution ; and, as we trust, a new era is arrived, when the streams of private bounty which, in former times, have flowed so freely, towards the higher seminaries of learning to be absorbed by the few, will now be spread out wide and far to refresh and gladden the long-forgotten heritage of the many.

No one can cast the swiftest glance over the field of educational labor, as it existed in this State, three years ago, without discovering dangers, from open and from covert attack, from marshalled array and from secret ambush, to be encountered by any one, who, with sincerity and zeal, should enter it, for the purpose of reforming its abuses ;—dangers, personal to himself and to the cause of his affections. Not a step could be taken, but some adverse interest would be alarmed. Had the schoolhouses in the fourteen counties in the State been put up at auction, there was many a gentleman's mansion, in each of them, which the whole proceeds of the sale of the schoolhouses in his county, would hardly have been sufficient to purchase. Yet to call upon the people to rebuild, remodel, or repair these ruinous edifices, and to incur the necessary charges in making them suitable for the purposes of their erection, was deemed far less gracious, than the gratuitous flattery concerning the perfection of their schools, with which, for years, they had been pampered, free of expense. If the doctrine were advanced, that a teacher of youth,—a builder up of the immortal temple of the spirit,—was not a spontaneous production of the earth, but must be prepared for his office by toil and study, and the aid of many other minds ; were there not some of the six thousand teachers in the State who would look with inverted sympathies, upon suggestions for improvement, that threatened a respectable occupation and a desirable income of their own ? There are tough problems, in this world, and it might not have been so

easy for all of the teachers to adjust the moral relations between their own monthly wages and the welfare for life of their neighbors' children. But there were stronger and more active pecuniary interests than these, already in full possession of the field. Hundreds of authors and compilers of school books,—of copy-right owners, and agents and venders, stationed in every town all over the State,—some of whom had the feeling of paternity, and others the attachment of interest for the school books, in which so vast and permanent a trade is carried on ;—all these stood almost in an attitude of natural hostility towards the originators and the agents in any work of improvement or reform. Then, again, a vast portion of the wealthy, and a large majority of the members of the learned professions, had withdrawn their own children from the public schools, had established independent seminaries of instruction for them, and had not only turned over the administration of these schools to the hands of men, possessed of less intelligence and less means, than themselves, but had drawn to their own service the more competent portion of the teachers ; and to some extent, therefore, had detached these teachers from the common cause, if, indeed, they had not placed them in a position, adverse to its interests. Nor, in the most rapid enumeration of difficulties and dangers, can it be overlooked, that, as the system of public instruction has relations to temporal things, and therefore would arouse the apprehensions of those whose minds were wholly fastened upon temporal objects ; so it has certain relations to man's highest hopes and destinies, and therefore all movements connected with it, would be jealously watched by all men, who claimed to have these interests in their particular keeping ;—especially so, if, in any case, their own peculiar modes of keeping them had been mistaken for the great interests themselves. Nor, in a great community like ours, where views and opinions seem to exhaust all possible forms and complexions ;—where ignorance and error claim an equal right to judge and to speak, with knowledge and wisdom, can it be thought strange, if some were found, who, from obliquity of intellect or perversity of feeling, should stand ready to assail any system or any administrators of any system, from the mere pleasure they might derive from the activity of ill-disposed faculties. Whoever, three years ago, was stationed at the helm, or had embarked in this service, in any capacity, and looked abroad towards any point of the compass, must have seen a horizon, filled with these elements of opposition, ready, perhaps to be gathered into a tempest to overwhelm him,—perhaps only to expend their forces here and there, in fitful gusts and squalls,—the types of petty anger and ill-will, rather than the symbols of might.

We have not adverted to these sources of danger, either in a boastful spirit, because they have proved powerless in obstructing the movement of the public mind, or in quenching its kindling enthusiasm ; nor have we adverted to them, at all, in a retributive temper, for the sake of invoking or of inflicting rebuke or chastisement upon any one. It is known to all our readers, that, so far as the Board of Education or ourselves have been concerned, although, for a year past, we have had in our hands an organ, through whose columns interested opposition could have been exposed, and groundless imputations upon motives and measures could have been traced home, in all cases, either to uninformed or to prejudiced sources, we have not written a single line, nor devoted the space of a single word, in exposing misrepresentations, or in holding up false accusers to public indignation. The adversaries of this cause,—or, if they please, of the manner in which it has been conducted,—have had the field to themselves. Our reason for pursuing this course is simple and brief. We believe, and, so far as our own instrumentality is concerned, we know, that all apprehensions on the part of any one, that the course of education in this State, was to be perverted to any unworthy or party purpose whatever, originated in the premature judgments or the ignorance of men, respecting the objects



and plans of those, more immediately engaged in carrying it on. And if we have forbore to retort upon the opposers of this noble work ; if we have refrained from exposing the selfishness of one, the short-sightedness of another, the dogmatism and party zeal of a third, it was because we trusted, that they would at last, under the steady, impartial, upright administration of the cause, see good reason to dismiss their suspicions ; and even to aid in promoting, as a public boon, the course, which, owing to their inadequate comprehension, or their hasty and mistaken views of its object, they had assailed as dangerous. In process of time, we doubt not, that all, except the incorrigibly perverse, will admit more light,—will adopt juster views, and thereby become as earnest to approve, as they have been ready to condemn. It remains with them to determine whether we have formed too high an opinion of their intelligence and candor, and whether, in the end, we shall have to plead guilty to the charge of giving them credit for an eventual impartiality and justice, which they do not deserve.

But it would be wrong and ungrateful to recount these—we may almost call them—natural sources of doubt or opposition, and then to stop. There is a large compensatory account, to be cordially acknowledged. There have been many zealous, earnest, *man-loving* men in the community,—ready not only to speak, but to act, ready not only to ask, but to give,—for the improvement of instruments, processes, or agents, in this last, noblest, most precious fruit of civilization,—the universal education of the physical, intellectual, and moral man. In every place, there are teachers, holding comprehensive views, and alive, to their inmost heart, with a sense of responsibility for the manner, in which the almost creative functions of a teacher should be exercised ;—ready to labor with their whole faculties, while they can do any good,—equally ready to stand aside and give place to any one who can do more good than themselves. Nor,—after making some exceptions,—do we believe that the gnawings of avarice have so far eaten out humanity from the hearts of authors, that they are willing to stand in the market-place and sell misguiding, pernicious books, to dwarf and darken the minds of children, for the profits' sake ; as a villanous victualler would sell poisonous food in the shambles, reckless of the disease or death it might occasion. Professional men, and men of wealth, also, are seeing more clearly, that it is their duty to return to the Common School, and to place there their children, that is, their treasures, that where their treasures are, there may their hearts be also. One clergyman has publicly declared, that he felt bound to exert all his powers to provide as good a school for the children of his parishioners, as he would for his own. Another, in a public report, made by the school committee to the town, has uttered this generous sentiment ; “ Your committee have acted upon the principle, that they would not employ one to teach the children of their neighbors, to whom they would be unwilling to commit their own children for instruction.” So, too, there are men,—devoted lovers of truth, earnest for its propagation, differing undoubtedly from us, as from each other, on some collateral points, respecting which good men are unhappily divided in opinion,—yet who have extended to us a full measure of charity and confidence. To them, be our grateful acknowledgments forever given. Happily, there are men,—and the number of them is increasing,—who can combine the exercise of an enlarged charity towards the opinions of others, with an unwavering adherence to their own.

On the whole, then, we congratulate our friends and coadjutors, upon the fact, that the cause of education, in this State, gives indications of fulfilling its progressive nature. We believe that a new set of ideas and feelings has begun to circulate through the veins and arteries of our community, and is restoring benumbed limbs and organs to life. As reflecting men look around them, they see the unspeakable blessings of intelligence and morality. In contrast with these, they see the unspeakable evils of error

and vice. They see that all learned men die out of the world, while all who come into it are ignorant. They see, that time removes the wise and the good from the prosecution of their beneficent labors, while all who come forth from the hand of Omnipotence to occupy their places upon earth, are neither wise nor good, but only capable of being made so ; that, like their predecessors, they may be made wise and good, and fitted to carry on towards perfection the blessed works, already begun,—or, unlike them, they may be left to demolish and corrupt whatever has been worthily accomplished ;—and whether they are to be the one or the other, depends mainly upon the favoring or the adverse influences, to which they are subjected, in the early years of life.

Men, too, who take any enlarged view of the course of nations and the destiny of the human race, see that a new era has opened upon the world. The history of the future is to be widely different from that of the past. The stream of time is changing its direction. It is about to pass through moral regions, such as in its whole previous course, since it broke from the original fountain, it has never traversed before. We must prepare ourselves to move with safety, through the new realms we are entering.

The education already given to the people, creates the necessity of giving them more. What has been done, has awakened new and unparalleled energies ; and the mental and moral forces, which have been roused into activity, are now to be regulated. These forces are not mechanical, which expend their activity and subside to rest. But they are spiritual forces, endued with an inextinguishable principle of life and progression. The coiled spring of the mechanic loses power as it unwinds ;—but the living soul of man, once conscious of its power, cannot be quelled ; it multiplies its energy, and accelerates its speed, in an upward or downward direction, forever. Our age has unwonted strength, and is advancing to greater ; but it wants the spirit of docility and teachableness. Wisdom must be constituted its guardian. Let us think, betimes, that power and freedom may be a curse as well as a blessing ; that knowledge is but an instrument, which the profligate and the flagitious may use, as well as the brave and the just.

If hereditary prepossessions are discarded, there is need of profounder counsels in the formation of our own judgments. It is said, by some, that, in this age and country, every thing is unsettled ; that maxims in conduct, and truths in morals, which had passed current and unquestioned for ages, must here be analyzed and examined again ; that the great axioms of life must be demonstrated anew, to be saved from denial and scepticism. And why should it not be so ? Truth, indeed, is eternal ; but the minds which sought it out, and lived by it, are gone. New minds, ignorant, weak, erring, disturbed by passion, have succeeded to their places. The old truth must be taught to the new minds, or it can have no power over them. Truths, no matter how momentous or enduring, are nothing to the individual, until he appreciates them, and feels their force, and acknowledges their sovereignty. He cannot bow to their majesty, until he sees their power. All the blind, then, and all the ignorant,—that is, all the children,—must be educated up to the point of perceiving and admitting truth, and acting according to its mandates. It is not, then, that truths are unsettled, but that we are allowing a race to grow up, to come upon the stage of life, to affect society, in all its sacred and endearing relations,—to be society itself,—who have never been led to the temple, where Truth dwells, whose eyes have not been opened to that divine vision, who have been taught to pay no homage to the goddess, and are, therefore, unworthy of her consecration. *Let the hearts of the fathers, then, be turned towards the children.*

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“A patriot is known by the interest he takes in Common Schools.”

## ANNUAL ABSTRACT OF THE SCHOOL RETURNS FOR THE YEAR 1838-9.

[We publish, below, the Report to the Board of Education, prefixed to the Annual Abstract of the School Returns for the year 1838-9. This Abstract contains copious selections from the reports made by the school committees, last spring, to their respective towns, and we believe it will surpass, in utility, and in practical value to the school committees, any document ever before presented to them. They will find in it full and able discussions, upon almost every question, relating to the external administration of our Common School system. The evils under which it has languished, are exposed; the remedies by which it may be renovated, are suggested. We may recur to it hereafter; at present, we commend it most earnestly to the attention of all school committees, and to the friends of education generally. We copy, for the present number, selections from an admirable report made to the town of Westborough.

A copy of the Abstract for each board of school-committee men and for each town clerk in the Commonwealth is now in the office of the Secretary of State and ready for delivery.—ED.]

## TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

GENTLEMEN,—By the acts of April 20, 1837, and April 13, 1838, respectively, it was enacted, that “the Board of Education shall prepare and lay before the Legislature, in a printed form, on or before the second Wednesday of January, annually, an Abstract of the School Returns, received by the Secretary of the Commonwealth;”—and that “the school committees shall annually make a detailed report of the condition of the several public schools in their respective towns, designating particular improvements and defects in the methods or means of education, and stating such facts and suggestions in relation thereto, as, in their opinion, will best promote the interests and increase the usefulness of said schools; which report shall be read in open town meeting, in February, March, or April, of each year, or be printed and distributed for the use of the inhabitants; and shall be deposited in the office of the clerk of the town; and an attested copy thereof shall be transmitted by said school committee to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, with the official return now required by law:”—

And by two votes of the Board of Education, of May 30, 1839, and October 22, 1839, respectively, I was directed to superintend the preparation of said Abstract for the year 1838-9; and also authorized to make such selections from the reports of the school committees, as I might think proper, and to publish the same in such manner, as I might deem advisable.

In compliance with the above directions, the following Abstract, with accompanying “selections” from the reports of the school committees, has been prepared and printed, and is now respectfully submitted to the Board. I believe it will be found both the most interesting and useful document, ever presented to the people of this Commonwealth, on the subject of Education.

The duty of making “selections” from the reports of the school committees, involved the exercise of a discretion of the most difficult and delicate nature. These reports constitute a mass of documents, equal to about twelve hundred compactly written letter-paper pages. In length, they vary from less than ten lines to more than fifty manuscript pages, closely written. Some of them contain almost nothing, excepting a repetition of the statistical facts, more conveniently imbodyed in the tables of the Abstract; while others enter upon an extensive discussion of most of the topics connected with our Common School system. Some of them are almost wholly occupied with minute, local comparisons and discriminations, between the different schools in their respective towns; between different classes in the same school, and different scholars in the same class; while others, disposing with brevity



of the condition of their own schools, proceed to speculate at large on general and comprehensive questions, pertaining to the necessity and the benefits of Education, and the consequences to the rising, and to future generations, which must follow from its neglect. Many things contained in them were found to be true of, and applicable to, the condition of the towns only, to which they were respectively made ; while some, again, abound in truths of a universal and permanent nature. From this mass of papers, so widely differing in extent and in character, it became my duty, under the above-recited vote, to make "selections." It is proper also to state, that, at the time the above vote was passed, the Board desired me to restrict myself in making the "selections," so that the number of pages of the Abstract should not very much exceed that of the year 1837. In order to acquaint myself, in detail, with the character of the reports, and to confine myself within prescribed limits, in making the best "selections" from them, I adopted the course of reading the whole body of them once, to learn their contents, and then, of reading them the second, and often the third time, to enable myself to distinguish between what it would be advisable to select and what to omit. In regard to this part of my duty, I can only say, that, after fully mastering their contents, I found that the main body of them could be analyzed under the five heads given below ; and that it seemed to me expedient to omit what properly fell under the first two, and to publish so much of what fell under the last three, as would exhibit the existing condition of the Common School system in this State ; the means recommended for its improvement ; and the high value which is set upon, and the hopes that cluster around it.

The five heads are as follows :—

1st. Formal introductions, and statistical facts, in regard to the several schools ; such facts as are required by law to be sent to the Secretary of State, and may now be found, in a condensed form, in the tabular portion of the Abstract.

2d. Particular comparisons between the different schools of the town or the different classes in a school ; remarks upon the fitness or unfitness of individual teachers, with consequent commendations and censures ;—notices of individual cases of great merit or demerit, on the part of school districts, parents, and scholars, and many other points of a local or domestic nature.

Whatever has appeared to me to fall legitimately under either of these two heads, I have omitted in the "selections." A town might feel mortified, and yet the State derive no benefit, from its being recorded, that, in one place, the discipline of the school was so lax, that card-playing was practised by the scholars, not only at intermissions, but *perpetrated* during school hours ; that, in another, certain scholars were reported to the town, by name, in open town meeting, for gross acts of misconduct, in connection with the school ; that during a contest in one district, concerning the school-house, it took fire, though unoccupied, and burnt down ; that in another, where opposition against the instructor prevailed to some extent, the house was repeatedly rendered untenable by the chimney's being closed up, and finally, that the school was wholly broken up in consequence of these infamous proceedings, and so forth, and so forth. In regard to these and other similar cases, where the conduct of a few individuals has exposed the whole town to disgrace, I have felt that their honor ought to be safe in my hands. I have also omitted all the cases, where schools have been prematurely closed on account of the proved incompetency of the teachers. On this subject, however, I would remark, that when it is considered, how many and what powerful reasons oppose the breaking up of a school, in the course of the term, on account of the incompetency of the teacher, and therefore, that such an event would not happen, excepting in the extremest cases of necessity, the number of schools, as disclosed by the reports, which have

been discontinued for this cause, indicates the deplorable extent of the evil suffered by the rising generation, from a want of competent teachers ; and the high necessity of applying some remedy to a condition of things, which often makes the selection of a teacher of our youth, a choice among inefficient.

3d. Another, and the most extensive portion of the committees' reports, may be regarded as EVIDENCE of the general condition of the schools throughout the State. Two reports,—one for the year 1837, and one for 1838,—have been presented by me to the Board, containing general representations of the condition of our Common School system. But from the extent of the ground they covered, and the variety of the topics they discussed, they were, necessarily, of a very general character. Great detail was impracticable. They were the collective views of a spectator, surveying a wide field, and describing its general aspects only. Hence, individuality was lost ; and the force of statements was weakened, because the extent of them could not be exactly defined. But in the committees' reports we have, not the generalizations of a traveller respecting the condition of our schools, but the minuteness and detail of hundreds of local residents and daily eye-witnesses. We have distinct, precise, full testimony, from men, standing at their several stations, in different towns, all over the Commonwealth, respecting the actual state and condition of schoolhouses, teachers, and schools. Substantial and intelligent men have reported to their own townsmen what they have seen and known, and their reports have been heard and considered, and then sanctioned and authenticated by public acceptance. In this respect, therefore, these reports may be regarded as a mass of documentary evidence, agreed to by the parties interested, and superior, in point of credibility and convincing force, to ordinary legal depositions,—showing into what a state of feebleness and neglect our Common School system has fallen, and how deeply decay has eaten into its vitals. The evidence before taken was efficient, mainly, in leading to measures for procuring this more extensive and authentic evidence. Although, in many respects, there is a great degree of sameness in this evidence, yet it cannot be regarded as repetition, because each report respects the town only for which it was made ; and had the report of any one town been omitted, because of its general resemblance to the report of another town, the condition of the schools, in the town omitted, could not have been known. It is to be hoped, that when the public learn into what a dilapidated condition the whole frame of this venerable institution has fallen, they will rouse themselves to some corresponding exertion to save it from irretrievable ruin.

4th. Another portion of these reports exhibits the mature views of the school committees,—a class of men, who, taken as a body, are by far the most intelligent on the subject of Education, to be found in the State,—respecting the causes which have conspired to produce the present condition of our schools, the evils they now suffer, the dangers that beset them, and the measures of improvement and reform, by which they may be renovated. Generally speaking, the reports are remarkably clear, judicious, business-like documents ;—to all appearance prepared by men, anxious only for the discovery of truth, and impartial in their awards of praise and blame ;—they are at once conciliatory to the people, yet just to the great cause they espouse and advocate. In very few of them, is there a forgetfulness of the subject in hand, for the ostentation of literary display.

On many very important and interesting points, the views presented are so judicious and full, as to leave very little, if any thing, further to be said. On such subjects as the expediency of forming union schools, from two or more contiguous school districts, wherever localities will permit ; the separation of the larger and smaller scholars into two schools, and placing the latter under the care of female teachers, with the advantages both to the old and the young of such an arrangement ; the location, construction,



and condition of schoolhouses ; the necessity of concert and coöperation between prudential and superintending committees ; the importance of higher qualifications in school teachers, and the extent of the sacrifice of the dearest and most enduring interests of society, resulting from present deficiencies ; the deplorable amount of absences from school,—now for the first time brought to light by the practice of keeping Registers in the schools,—together with the tardiness or want of punctuality in those who do attend ; the prevailing embarrassments and hinderances consequent both from a deficiency and a diversity of school books ; the common proneness in pupils to neglect the rudiments of knowledge, through a childish ambition to engage in studies, which, because they are called *higher*, are absurdly supposed to be more important ; the advantages of school apparatus and district school libraries ; and the necessity, growing out of the very constitution of human nature—and therefore of everlasting duration—of combining moral with intellectual instruction ;—on these, and perhaps a few other topics, if the views contained in these reports could be adopted, realized, acted upon, but little room for amendment would be left. Could all the excellent practical suggestions, which are here made, be followed, and the evils here designated, be abolished, we should have something approaching very near to a perfect system of Common School education.

5th. Another point is most prominently brought out in these reports ; viz., the inappreciable value and worth affixed to our Common Schools,—the elevated rank among our other institutions assigned to them, by the most enlightened portion of the community. Through these reports, the great mass of the people present themselves before the Legislature and the public, and ask to be heard in reference to the only means of Public Instruction, which their sons and their daughters will ever enjoy. The authors and signers of these reports must have written them with a knowledge and a feeling of the condition, the wants, the prospects, of their own and their neighbors' children, visibly and palpably present to their minds. Under the influence of parental regard for their own offspring, and of Christian feeling towards those of their neighbors and townsmen, they have declared, how precious, how indispensable to the realization of their best hopes, to the removal of their worst fears, is this institution of the public schools ; and, with all earnestness, they have called for a greater liberality in their endowments, for the rejection of all selfish and sinister motives in their administration, and for a more ample share of public favor and liberality. Notwithstanding the low condition into which the whole system has fallen, no man can read these reports, without perceiving how firmly the value of that system is rooted in the convictions, and how deep is its hold of the affections, of the most thoughtful and reflecting men amongst us. No where is the slightest distrust manifested of the fitness and capacity of the institution to produce the worthiest results ; every where, the supineness of a portion of the community, and their indifference to their own best interests in neglecting to uphold it, are deplored, and all admixture of sectional and party feelings is fervently deprecated.

These last three points, with perhaps a few others of minor importance, have been kept in view, in making "selections" for this document. I have endeavored to distinguish between what it would be useful for the State to know, and that which could be serviceable to the town only ; including, therefore, the former, omitting the latter. It is to be understood, that I have taken only a small part of what the reports contain on these three topics ; but enough, I trust, to serve as evidence and information, in regard to the condition of the public schools, and the feelings of the friends of education towards them. It is proper, also, to add, that conflicting views on particular topics will occasionally be found. In a document like this, whose principal design is to show the condition and wants of our schools, it seemed right, that opposite opinions on important points, should both be

presented. Hence, when any recommendation or suggestion has been distinctly brought out, and urged as material to the welfare of the schools, it has found a place in these pages. In the whole number of the reports, there was but one which advocated or countenanced the idea of using sectarian books for religious instruction in the schools. That has been included, for the reason above given.

Representations contained in the reports respecting one evil, (that, however, of the grossest kind, and referred to with due condemnation,) I have wholly abstained from copying. Some of the committees, in their reports, animadvert, with a just feeling of the importance of the subject, upon one class of deficiencies in regard to the schoolhouses in their respective towns;—deficiencies, which, as they truly remark, not only leave the instinctive feelings of modesty and delicacy, natural to the young, wholly without protection; but actually subject the children, of both sexes, at a period of life when they know nothing of their fatal tendencies, to such acts of indecency and to such habits of impure thought and association, as directly lead, in after-life, to vulgarity, obscenity, pollution, and shame. Probably the committees, in many towns where this source, both of moral and physical impurity, exists, have abstained from exposing it, out of deference to that paradox in the human character, by which men will suffer the most flagrant indecencies to exist publicly, for years, under their daily inspection, which they are too delicately sensitive to hear mentioned at all;—or the committees may have refrained from advertg to it through fear of the ridicule that might be cast upon them by vulgar minds, which had grown up under the influence of the evil itself, and were a fit representation of its effects.

I have noticed the existence of every report, which has come into my hands from the Secretary of State.

Where no report has been received, the fact is stated, under the statistical table for the town, by the words, "No REPORT from School Committee."

*Returns* have been received from 298 towns,—a larger number than has ever before been heard from;—*reports* from 170 towns only. The ensuing year, the *reports* will doubtless be as numerous as the *returns*, as the law now affixes the same forfeiture to each neglect.

It is matter of deep regret that more of the towns did not direct the printing, and distribution among their citizens, of the reports. To have a copy of them in every family is the only efficient way to secure such attention as they deserve, to the important subjects they discuss. It is now easy to see, how very useful such a circulation of the reports of the last year would have been.

For the purpose of publishing "selections" from the reports, in connection with the statistical tables, I have been obliged to alter the form of this Abstract from the last. But each item in the tables is numbered, and reference will be easy from one town to another, as the corresponding item will always be found under the corresponding number.

HORACE MANN,

Secretary of the Board of Education.

Boston, December 25, 1839.

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"Gentility is neither in birth, manner, nor fashion; but in mind. A high sense of honor, a determination never to take a mean advantage of another, adherence to truth, delicacy and politeness towards those with whom you may have dealings, are the essential and distinguishing characteristics of a gentleman."

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Never suffer any thing of a sacred nature to be on your lips, without a corresponding sentiment of reverence in your heart.

[For the Common School Journal.]

## ON THE MOTIVES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN.

NO. III.

DEAR SIR,—From all that I have said against emulation, after having told you, that I considered the *love of approbation* as a commendable motive, you would be apt to infer, that I was not aware that the latter is an element in the former. It is not however to this element in emulation that I object, but to the desire of surpassing others and putting them down, and to the hatred and envy which are apt to follow, when that is impossible.

I suppose that the love of approbation is, to a greater or less degree, natural to every individual, and, if so, implanted in the character for a good purpose. It very soon shows itself in the child, and, for several of the earliest years, affords the parent one of the most powerful means of control and influence. If appealed to constantly and simply, I believe it may usually be made a genial and healthy element of the character. It is, however, sometimes debased and perverted by being associated with inferior motives. Parents, instead of being satisfied to depend on this motive, by showing that, if their children do well, they will be rewarded with their love and approbation, too often bring in the meaner motives of love of delicacies, pecuniary reward, or the desire of surpassing each other. Instead of saying, "If you will learn this lesson well, I shall love you even better than I do now, and you will have the satisfaction of feeling that you have my approbation;" they too often say, "Learn this, and you shall have an orange or a nice bit of cake;" or, still worse, "Let me see which of you two will learn his lesson best and soonest."

Such *language*, of course, as I have suggested above, is fit to be addressed to only very young children, but the appeal may be made just as effectually in other ways, even without uttering a word. A child may be made to feel, that by improper conduct he will forfeit his parent's approbation, and, if he has been properly trained, he will feel this to be one of the greatest losses possible. I suppose that all parents begin, instinctively, by appealing to this motive. The mischief is, that they too often degrade it by mean associations, and pervert it by giving it a wrong direction. "What will people think?" is the common expression of parents without principle, and is sometimes thoughtlessly uttered even by those who would shrink from believing that they were acting themselves from a regard to the opinion of the world, and would justly condemn themselves for inculcating such a principle on their children. The love of indiscriminate approbation,—that of the bad, the worthless, the frivolous, equally with that of the intelligent and the just, would be as likely to have an ill effect on the character as a good,—to form a mere creature of the world, as to form a person of high views and noble principles. It is obvious, therefore, that the good influence of this motive depends on its associations. It is perfectly safe, only when it has reference to those who bestow approbation on what deserves it, and who are capable of judging. In the natural course of things, children, from their earliest years, look towards their parents for approbation. And thence, in a considerable degree, comes the influence they have, for good or ill, over their children. In the exercise of this influence, parents have habitual reference to higher principles than they practise upon. Few parents, it has often been observed, are so perverted as to be willing that their children should be no better than themselves. Children, therefore, acting from the desire of the approbation of parents whom they see to be other than they should be, have reference to the standard to which they perceive them aiming, rather than to that by which they see them live. And so it comes that the approbation of what is good, from a bad parent, leads to a higher virtue in the child than either of them has lived up to.



In school, the love of approbation should be directed, first to the parent at home ; next, to the teacher ; lastly and least, to the standard of action and opinion pervading the little community. In order that it may be directed to the parent, the teacher must either have constant intercourse with him, or he must stately send him some report of the child's progress and deportment. The latter, where practicable, is the better course, since, when the reports are made on just principles, they come to act regularly, and form habits of action of the greatest importance in the child.

In order that written reports should have a permanently good effect, they must be, as nearly as possible, just. I say, as nearly as possible, because I hold it to be almost impossible that they should be quite just. To be quite just, the dumbest child in a school, who has made uniform and faithful exertions, should have an expression of entire commendation ; and to be able to say how faithful the exertions have been, we must have a complete knowledge of the capacity and character of the child. Now, as this is obviously very difficult, it is equally so, to do absolute justice. An earnest desire, however, on the part of the teacher, to do exact justice and to rectify any instance of injustice which is brought to his knowledge, has almost the effect of justice.

The reputation for justice and benevolence, in the teacher, is of course essential to his having a good influence in the bestowal of his own approbation. The expressed approbation of an able teacher will have its effect, doubtless, in stimulating to exertion, even when it is clearly unjust. But the influence of such approbation is pernicious, inasmuch as it sacrifices the child's love of justice to his progress in his studies ; while, on the other hand, a teacher of moderate intellectual ability, will be able to give great force to his approbation, and to exert an influence on his pupils higher far than belongs to his own mere intellect, if he takes care always to fortify his opinions by an appeal to their natural sense of justice.

This sense of justice, however, in children collected from families of all kinds, such as usually make up a miscellaneous school, needs continual correction. It is apt to be warped by too strong a feeling, in each individual, of his own rights, and a disregard of the rights of others. Occasionally, you find a child who thinks that more than justice is done to himself. Much more frequently, each thinks he receives less than justice. When a teacher is sure he is himself just, at least in his intentions, he may correct the perceptions of justice in his pupils. Till this is done, he cannot safely appeal to their judgment to award the meed of approbation.

The love of approbation then, with these limitations, may be appealed to as a powerful and harmless motive. Without these limitations, it must be admitted to be unsafe, from the danger of its invading the province of those higher principles, which it should be the business of education to establish as umpires over all the parts of the mental and moral constitution.

Very truly yours, G. B. E.

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FROM THE ABSTRACT OF THE SCHOOL RETURNS OF THE YEAR 1838-9.

[Extracts from the Report of the School Committee of Westborough.]

\* \* \* Your committee are of opinion, that the character of our schools is essentially affected, and, in some instances, their usefulness materially hindered, by the condition of the schoolhouses. There are some general defects in the construction and location of school-rooms, which, though they may not, in all cases, justify the immediate expense of alteration, it is hoped will be carefully avoided, in houses hereafter to be built. Many of our houses are too small for the accommodation, and much more, for the comfort of the pupils. The seats, in some instances, are so narrow and confined as materially to abridge the comfort, and consequently the progress of the pupils. In some houses, also, the space unoccupied by seats is so limited,

that many of the scholars are necessarily crowded so near the stove, as to destroy their energy and capacity for study, if not to endanger their health. And in addition to these evils, there are some houses, which there is no suitable way to ventilate, and thus to secure a fresh and invigorating air. \* \*

Were it not enjoined upon them by the statute, your committee would be unwilling to close their first annual report, without suggesting some things which they deem essential to the best interests of our schools.

The station which the teacher occupies, and the power which he wields to measure the usefulness of the school, furnish sufficient reasons for commencing our suggestions with him.

In the first place, then, your committee think that a higher standard of qualification than that which has prevailed, should be insisted on, in all employed as teachers. By this suggestion, they would not be understood as implying any censure or disparagement to those who have been employed in this laborious calling the past year. On the contrary, they do not doubt that our teachers would bear honorable comparison with those of other towns. In this respect, our schools, generally, have been fortunate. Our teachers have probably been as well qualified as public sentiment has demanded. And yet your committee are confident they will be sustained by these same teachers, in saying that the standard of qualification is too low. The business of arousing, and guiding, and forming the young mind, has been made too cheap and unimportant. The habits of thinking, and the impressions of character for energy or lassitude, right or wrong, are, to an important extent, formed and fixed in the school-room, and by the school teacher. The impression has to some extent prevailed, that, if the teacher were but a little in advance, and could only keep ahead, of his pupils, in the branches taught, he was abundantly qualified for his work. But he who would teach successfully must not only know the facts, but understand the principles, of the branches taught, and be able, without hesitation, to explain these principles, and apply them to particular examples. For instance, one may be able to apply the rules of syntax, who is ignorant of the nature of language, and the philosophy of grammar. A man may be able to spell a word correctly, who is ignorant of the reasons or principles which require such an arrangement of letters. But if he cannot explain *why* the word is spelled as it is, the pupil has learned but one word of a large class, while, in the same time and with more certainty, he might have learned the whole class of five or five hundred words.

And here your committee wish especially to remark, that one of the most essential qualifications of a teacher, and that in which they most often find a deficiency, is a knowledge of "the nature and powers of letters, and the just method of spelling words." How to *speak*, and how to *spell*, and how to *read*, are first among the literary qualifications of the teacher, because they are the most indispensable attainments in the man. If it should be remembered that a man can but imperfectly teach that which he but imperfectly understands; and that the errors, and defects, and faults of the teacher, are as diligently learned, as his more wholesome instructions, the importance of high qualifications will be readily felt.

The committee are aware that the power is already vested in them, to shut out from the charge of our schools those, whom they deem unqualified for the station. But they respectfully suggest, that, in their opinion, the evil to be remedied lies further back than the teachers,—in the too moderate expectations of the community respecting their qualifications. As in all departments of commerce, so here, the commodity will be equal to the demand. And when the community feel the importance of having teachers of higher qualifications, and are ready to sustain them, then better teachers will be forthcoming.

Your committee would suggest, also, that greater regard be had to the general temperament, and power of self-government, in those to whom the

education of your children is committed. He is but poorly educated, who has disciplined only his mind, or gained a knowledge of books. There are many, capable of teaching the various branches of intellectual knowledge required by the statute, whose capability utterly fails to meet the other requisition of the statute—"good behavior." If to high intellectual attainments, and skill in communicating knowledge, there be an offset of gross petulance and impatience, or want of courtesy and decorum, in the teacher, the loss to his pupils, on the score of morals and manners, may outbalance the gain in intellectual acquirement. He *gives chaff*, compared with the gems of purest ray, which he *takes away* from the child. He teaches geography and arithmetic, but he *unteaches* the lessons of mildness, and generosity, and patience, and propriety, and decorum, which you have diligently taught, and cherished as the fairest and the richest ornaments of your child. \* \* \*

Much may be done by visiting the schools during their progress, as well as at the opening and close; but much more, by encouraging children in study at home; furnishing the time and the means of study, accompanied by expressions of interest in what, and how much they learn, so that the term of school may be of the highest possible avail. The want of such manifestation of interest is doubtless oftener occasioned by a want of reflection, than a want of the interest itself.

And it is by no means least in importance, that parents become acquainted, and be familiar with the teacher; that they make the teacher feel how important they regard the trust committed to him; that, by all possible means, they convince him that they are not indifferent as to the influence he exerts over their children; that as he is employed to do them good, they not only expect they will receive good at his hands, but are ready to welcome him to their families and their hearts, as a helper and a friend. To accomplish this expected good, the teacher must receive more than his stipulated compensation. He must receive the respect and the confidence of the parents. He must receive honor in the sight of the children, according to the influence he is expected to exert over them. Encourage the teacher by showing that you do not lightly esteem, but attach importance and honor to his labors, and he will be doubly diligent. Treat him with neglect, and he feels that he has no gratitude to expect, however faithful he may be. Make him feel that your only care is to get the worth of your money from his toil, and he is degraded to make his compensation the only end of his effort. But, cheer him by your familiar acquaintance, your respect, your confidence, and he will requite you by seeking and securing the happiness and improvement of your children.

Another suggestion, nearly allied to the last, is the importance of a constant and punctual attendance of the scholars at the school. \* \* \*

But there is another irregularity not noted in the Register, probably not less injurious to the school than occasional absences; viz., *a want of punctuality*. In some of our schools, the year past, teachers have been compelled to commence day after day with not more than one third or one half of their pupils present, while the tardy come "like a continual dropping in a rainy day," often during the whole first hour of the school. This is a prominent hinderance to the progress of the school. There is a sad loss in time and interest and instruction, to the individual thus tardy. It occasions also a derangement, oftentimes, in the order of classification, as to reading and recitation. It is moreover a great interruption in their various studies. As our schoolhouses are constructed, it is often necessary for three or four to stand up, or move out of their places, to let the tardy pass to his seat. This process, often repeated, occasions great loss to the school. It adds, also, to the difficulty of preserving that degree of discipline and stillness in the school-room, which is essential to a good school. In the winter season, also, there is another serious evil connected with this prac-



tice. The constant opening of the door lets in a fresh current of cold air, which, in most of our schoolhouses, is by no means needful, either for the health or comfort of the inmates. An extra quantity of fuel must be deposited upon the fire to warm the house, which, while it throws the small children, nearest, into a fever, still fails to reach the more distant. Hence the order of the school is disturbed by the long process often necessary, by alternate visits to the fire, to raise the temperature sufficiently to commence study. To say that one third of the morning is sometimes unnecessarily wasted in this manner, would doubtless be a moderate estimate of the evil. And when they remember that it is an evil which parents in many instances might prevent by a word, your committee cannot but cherish the hope that every parent will have sufficient regard to the welfare of his own and his neighbors' children, in all possible cases to apply the remedy.

Your committee would further suggest the importance to our schools, of a more perfect discipline, and of a more decided coöperation of parents with the teacher, to this end. This is a topic of the first importance to our schools, but on which, time will permit only a few remarks in this report. Were parents more generally in the habit of visiting the schools during their progress, your committee think they might have been spared the necessity of remark on this point. The importance of discipline would then have been felt, and the difficulty of maintaining it, especially in our large and crowded schools, would have been a matter of personal conviction with each individual.

It is matter of fact, to which few are strangers, that a large portion of the time and energy of our most skilful teachers, in some of our larger schools, is consumed in securing that degree of order and stillness, and subjection to wholesome rules, which the good of the school demands; and that, after all, the usefulness of the school is greatly circumscribed, by the imperfect order, or the gross disorder, which, in some instances, prevails. The causes of this sad defect, and the remedy to be applied, demand a careful investigation. The tendencies in this respect, are strongly setting towards the entire defeat of that distinguishing institution of New England—*The Common School System*. The influences which are now at work to prevent a wholesome restraint and discipline in our schools, if not soon checked, will effectually frustrate the design of the Common School, and render the system a curse rather than a blessing. And your committee feel constrained to say, that, in their opinion, such a result, in some instances, has already, in part, at least, been experienced in this place. They have been pained to find such impressions existing among our youth, and such obstacles thrown in the way of teachers, as have, to a great extent, paralyzed their efforts, and rendered their measures for the good of the school fruitless. They would not be understood as saying that there has been no want of skill on the part of teachers in the cases alluded to; but they can say with confidence, that a less degree of skill would have accomplished far happier results, had it been sustained by the sympathy and coöperation of all the parents.

It is a loose, or rather a false notion, respecting the authority with which the law of common sense, as well as the statute, invests the teacher, viz., an impression that he has no right to enforce obedience,—which, more often than any thing else, occasions the necessity of any violent or physical measures, to secure obedience. When the pupil, who has violated the wholesome regulations imposed upon the school, is called to account for his disobedience, he sometimes feels aggrieved and disgraced; his dignity is insulted by such an infringement of his right of self-control; and he immediately assumes the attitude of defence, and resistance of authority. He stands upon his rights, and claims the privilege of doing as he pleases in school. *He comes to school to learn, not to be governed.* Now if such a spirit of anti-government receive the countenance of—if it be not frowned upon by—the parent or guardian, the authority of the teacher is nullified, and

disorder and confusion are introduced into the school. And if the teacher still asserts his authority, and, because his school is but one body, claims that it shall be no monster, and therefore shall have but one *head*, he maintains authority at the expense of the love of the governed, so essential to improvement, and is denominated a *tyrant*.

But let every child enter the school-room with the indelible impression from his parent, that the authority of the teacher is necessary, and right, and legal, and must and will be sustained; let the parent require, on pain of his own displeasure, as if he had himself been disobeyed, that his child shall submit to all the regulations of the school, and that no infraction of them can be countenanced or palliated; and this impression would forestall all necessity of that rigid, despotical authority, and those severe penalties, which, without it, are often indispensable. No teacher would maintain a despotism, but in peril of the greater evil of anarchy. But he is sometimes compelled to rule with a rod of iron, because his pupils have imbibed the notion that he has no right to rule at all.

If a teacher abuse the authority vested in him, there is always a remedy. But to make such abuse the occasion of infusing into the mind of the child the mania of anti-government, or the idea that he may resist any authority which *he* may deem exorbitant, instead of remedying, aggravates the evil. Instead of removing abuse, it destroys all wholesome government.

This evil, which has become so truly alarming, your committee are persuaded, proceeds from a quite limited source. The great mass of the community, are doubtless in favor of a wholesome government in school. But it is found to be in the power of a few individuals to nullify, to a great extent, the authority and influence of a judicious and skilful teacher. Scholars are sometimes tolerated in school whose only influence is to thwart the efforts of the teacher, both for discipline and instruction;—scholars, who *teach* more than they *learn*, and that “evil and only evil altogether.” “One” such “sinner destroyeth much good.” How far the well-disposed should be subjected to this calamity, and the community to the consequent loss to their children, and waste of funds, your committee do not pretend to decide.

Your committee would suggest further, the importance of greater coöperation between the prudential and superintending committees. Some of the interests of the schools seem to demand such concert. The superintending committee are sometimes put to great inconvenience, by being called upon to examine a teacher, on the morning appointed for the opening of the school. For some reason, of which they have before had no hint, the school commences before the usual time. Only a part of the committee, perhaps, can be assembled. The examination must be protracted till after the hour for commencing his labors, and the school waits. The temptation, under such circumstances, is very strong to examine slightly, and thus peril the welfare of the school. But perhaps the committee are constrained, after all, to declare the examination unsatisfactory, and thus impose the burden of a new selection of a teacher, even at this late hour, upon the prudential committee. A little previous consultation, if it had not led to a more satisfactory choice, might at least have prevented much disappointment.

Your committee are of opinion, that the cause of Education would be greatly promoted, by furnishing to each of our public schools a small amount of apparatus, for the more perfect illustration of the several branches taught. They would, therefore, recommend that such apparatus be procured, in amount, not exceeding five dollars for each school; and also that a small circulating library for teachers, consisting of such books on the manner of teaching, as shall guide and quicken them in their work, be also procured, in amount, not exceeding ten dollars.